

Rob Roy Vegetation and Fuels Management Project

Project updates based on comment letters and open house meeting. Additional comments would be most helpful by October 14, 2019. Please send comments to Leslie Warta at leslie.warta@usda.gov or Brooke Owens at brooke.d.owens@usda.gov

Project Area Summary:

- Analysis Area: approximately 14,000 acres
- Total allowable treatment acres: 3,000
- Management Areas:
 - 5.13-Forest Products
 - 5.15-Forest Products and Ecological Maintenance and Restoration
 - 8.21-Developed Recreation
 - 8.6-Administrative Site
- Geographic Areas:
 - Upper Douglas Creek
 - Lower Douglas Creek
 - Middle Fork
- Temporary road needs estimate: 10 miles

Objectives:

- Manage forest lands affected by the MPB through appropriate silvicultural treatments to support regeneration of healthy forest conditions which are resilient to insect and disease.
- Manage hazardous fuel loading to protect municipal water infrastructure and water quality.
- Reduce fuel loads in and around the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) to minimize the risk of future wildland fire events to values at risk.

Proposed Treatment Types:

Any of the following treatments may be used individually or in combination with one another.

Silviculture Treatments:

Silviculture treatments are generally done through contracts, either a timber sale contract or service contract. Both contract methods utilize the same type of equipment and produces the same outcome.

Silviculture treatments have many restraints including but not limited to, cover type, slopes, soil type, proximity to stream/wetlands, sensitive and invasive botanical species, and wildlife habitats. Regardless of the type of silvicultural treatment, all areas. Silviculture treatments are generally described as the following:

- Regeneration harvest
 - Most trees are cut, Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines require retention of a few large living trees and snags within non-WUI areas. Areas designated as WUI are not required to have large trees or snags retained.
 - Areas are assessed post treatment to determine reforestation needs, these types of treatments are required to have regenerated or be reforested to adequate stocking levels (by forest cover type) within 5 years of harvest.
- Overstory Removal
 - In stands with two age classes, the overstory is cut leaving the existing understory to become the next forest
- Intermediate treatment or thinning
 - A portion of the trees are cut creating a wider spaced forest, more resilient to fire and insect outbreaks.

Fuels Treatments:

Fuels treatments are done through contracts and in-house. Prescribed burning is usually done by Forest Service personnel, while thinning and pruning is done with contracts or Forest Service personnel.

- Prescribed fire:
 - Depending on forest cover type, topography, objectives, and risk areas are analyzed for treatment through prescribed fire. This may include introducing fire into treated and untreated stands.
 - Broadcast burning
 - Used in both treated and untreated stands
 - Intention is to remove at least 50% of the fuels
 - Under-burning
 - A type of broadcast burning
 - Intention is to only reduce ground fuels with few trees being burned.
 - Jackpot burning
 - Burning of concentrations in treated or untreated stands
 - Intention is to reduce fuels by about 30%.
- Thinning:
 - Can be done with chainsaws by hand
 - Can be done using a machine with cutting or grinding head(mastication)
- Pruning:
 - Done by hand or machine, limbing trees to at least 6' high

A few examples include 1.) a regeneration harvest unit receiving jackpot burning to reduce fuel concentrations, 2.) a thinned stand being underburned, or 3.) a stand being thinned and pruned followed by jackpot or under-burning.

Roads

Exiting Roads:

- No existing roads will be decommissioned as part of this project
- Will work with log truck drives to maintain safe speeds
- Considering magnesium chloride applications on some of main routes to abate dust
- Should have little need for road closures since roadsides are treated and can be used for landings.

Temporary Roads:

- Anticipate the need for up to 10 miles of temporary roads.
- Per the CE category, all temp roads are to be rehabilitated 3 years post project completion.
 - This includes follow up fuel and reforestation projects, some roads may be needed after timber stand treatments are completed for follow up fuels and/or reforestation treatments, once these treatments are completed the road will be rehabilitated.

Useful Links:

- Medicine Bow Forest Plan-
https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/mbr/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsbdev3_025109
- Project website-<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56762>
- CFR 36 220.6 Categorical Exclusions-https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=922f55affc249e33e6f7482300ff24f6&mc=true&node=se36.2.220_16&rgn=div8
- Health Forest Restoration Act-
<https://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Healthy%20Forests%20Restoration%20Act%20of%202003.pdf>